

Appendix 2: Durham County Council: Non-Commissioned Supported Housing Provider Charter

What is the purpose of the Charter?

To identify an agreed set of standards and goals which will assist non-commissioned supported accommodation providers, Durham County Council, and its partners to work together to achieve outcomes for some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable residents in County Durham.

To ensure that the provision of high-quality supported accommodation, which meets local needs, is a shared ambition across all services in County Durham.

What is Supported Accommodation?

Supported accommodation refers to properties in which the tenant receives care, support or supervision for the purpose of enabling them to adjust to living as independently as possible in the community.

There is an expectation that supported housing is short term (usually no longer than 2 years) and transitional to independent living.

Who is the Charter for?

This Charter is for providers of non-commissioned Supported Accommodation, Durham County Council (DCC) and partners to commit to. It gives assurances to tenants, their family members and the wider community that provision meets a minimum standard and the supported housing provider has been reviewed by Durham County Council as part of the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP). It gives reassurance that the provider has been reviewed by DCC and that they remain committed to supporting follow up property inspections and tenant reviews to ensure standards remain high.

What will the Charter include?

The Charter will detail the minimum level of service expected to ensure that Supported Accommodation provision within County Durham meets local needs, is being delivered to a high standard and represents value for money: based upon regulation, guidance, recognised good practice, and the views of supported tenants. The Charter will include a summary of what defines good Supported Accommodation provision and will detail specific requirements for the three key areas:

1. Support provided to tenants
2. Housing and property management standards
3. The Housing Benefit claim and Value for money

Durham County Council and partners through the collaborative work of the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) will provide assistance, advice,

training and guidance to supported accommodation providers to achieve the shared goal of meeting these standards.

What does good look like?

All people who need it can access good quality supported housing which is safe. Tenants of supported housing have appropriate accommodation which meets their needs; delivers positive outcomes and endeavours to work towards moving them on to independent living over time. Supported housing provides value for money for DCC, tenants and the taxpayers, while recognising that costs can be more expensive than in general needs housing due to the specialised requirements. Those committed to supported housing will work together to ensure there is collaboration between local councils, providers and local delivery partners to assess, plan and deliver supported housing.

1. Support for tenants:

Together we will ensure that the support provided to tenants is personalised and targeted to meet the needs of the individual, as well as maximising independence to help facilitate a planned pathway to move to independent living.

Together we will ensure referrals into supported housing will involve two-way communication between the referrer and the supported housing providers on individual needs and suitability for a scheme. The prospective tenant is involved in the referral process and their input is sought to establish their needs and objectives.

Durham County Council will:

- Endeavour to ensure the appropriate referral is made to an organisation able to meet the support needs of the person in need of support, while also considering the prospective tenant's views.
- Support with referrals between providers if needed, to ensure the individual is supported according to their needs, recognising the individual strengths and capacity of different providers. This could be via a supported housing directory, information at the supported housing forum and / or a voids and referrals portal.
- Provide ongoing training and engagement opportunities, and updates on funding opportunities through the non-commissioned supported housing forum.
- Work with providers to carry out appropriate reviews of support received by tenants.

Providers of Supported Housing will:

- Work with the SHIP team, the Council and other partners to share, understand and deploy best practices, and commit to engage with ongoing SHIP reviews.
- Allocate accommodation based on established need and their ability to support those needs. Implementing assessment criteria that can be used as evidence.

- Consider the individual tenant needs and ensure they match these appropriately to the local environment and other residents.
- Ensure that the tenant's entry to the service is fully informative (including highlighting expectations outlined in a tenancy / license agreement), considerate to their current circumstances and responsive to their needs.
- Meet the tenant's needs, help them achieve their aspirations and enable them to make any necessary positive changes; through the provision of a good quality, informed, tailored, consistent and reliable support service.
- Provide safe accommodation where support is delivered which is suitable for the tenants needs. Examples may include: making adjustments to someone's living arrangements described in the Equality Act 2010, or ensuring there are good links with local policing teams to ensure tenants are kept safe.
- Ensure tenant's support is appropriately managed and responsive to their changing needs and circumstances. The provider understands and is committed to their safeguarding requirements and responsibilities.
- Make sure support, care or supervision is appropriate and is making a real difference for the tenants to live in the property. Support should be regular, ongoing and tailored to the tenant's support need.
- Ensure tenants who require more specialist support are provided information about additional services and assisted to access appropriate support agencies.
- Ensure staff employed by providers are appropriately trained and take part in continuous refresher training and professional development.
- Carry out safeguarding and background checks (DBS and references) on staff prior to their appointment.
- Ensure staff have undertaken correct training linked to safeguarding and accessing sensitive information.
- Put tenants at the centre of the move on process, and plans are put in place to ensure tenants are moved on.
- Support plans are developed in liaison with the tenant and are regularly reviewed. Individual tenant plans and records of tenant contact are well recorded and can be shared with the council on request.

2. Ensuring safe and good quality supported housing:

Together we will ensure the provision of safe, secure and good quality supported accommodation in County Durham through an agreed approach to minimum standards, inspections and maintenance.

Durham County Council will:

- Provide housing standards advice and training, where appropriate, and is receptive to having dialogue with providers to overcome issues.

Providers of Supported Housing will:

- Offer accommodation that has been assessed for its suitability in meeting the needs of residents, to ensure compliance with Equality Act 2010
- Ensure housing is accessible, appropriate, warm and safe - Supported Accommodation should be maintained in good repair and should be free from Category 1 Hazards and significant Category 2 Hazards as determined under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

- Fulfil their role in compliance with all relevant guidance.
- Have clear, simple and accessible complaints and redress procedures in place, in relation to property repairs and maintenance.
- Provide tenants with the most secure form of tenancy to meet their housing needs and circumstances.
- Have appropriate quality standards for response and repair times, for both routine and emergency repairs.
- Be compliant with local licensing arrangements (e.g. selective licensing or HMO license) and understand those additional requirements.

3. Ensuring supported housing provides value for money:

Together we will continue discussions about participation in sector-led accreditation and benchmarking schemes (e.g. Registered Provider Status) which demonstrate compliance with standards and are aimed at improving transparency and performance on value for money and quality of housing services.

Durham County Council will:

- Utilise existing legislation (where required) relating to both housing, health and safety and Housing Benefit to ensure minimum standards in supported housing and to ensure housing costs are not excessive.
- Ensure they take a consistent approach to administration and information sharing.
- Aim to process new Housing Benefit claims for existing supported housing units within 21 days of all supporting information required to assess the claim being received.
- Keep providers informed on the progress of approving any new supported accommodation schemes, responding to communications from providers within a maximum of 14 days.

Providers of Supported Housing will:

- Ensure costs for rent and eligible service charges are transparent, reasonable and regularly reviewed.
- Easily demonstrate how personal support is funded.
- Ensure information submitted to Durham County Council's Housing Benefit team is accurate, supplemented with appropriate supporting evidence and submitted in a timely a manner. The Housing Benefit claim is submitted by the tenant, or with the assistance of staff with the tenant present and agreeing to all information recorded on the application.
- Keep the council's Housing Benefit team updated immediately they become aware of any changes that affect the claimant's benefit, including changes in employment or changes of address.

Continuous Charter Development

The Non-Commissioned Supported Housing Provider Charter has been co-produced by Durham County Council, sector partners, supported accommodation providers and supported housing tenants. This is a working document providing an opportunity for ongoing review and the updating of relevant legislation, regulations and recognised good practice.

Signed by: _____

On behalf of: _____

Date: _____